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# AN ORATION

by

BREVET BRIGADIER-GENERAL HENRY H. BINGHAM

at the

UNVEILING OF

THE EQUESTRIAN STATUE

of

MAJOR-GENERAL WINFIELD SCOTT HANCOCK

on the

BATTLEFIELD OF GETTYSBURG

JUNE 5 1896

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HENRY H. BINGHAM

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# ADDRESS

of

BREVET BRIGADIER-GENERAL HENRY H. BINGHAM

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O-DAY, auspicious with the smile of God reflected from the bright blue cloudless sky and the rich coloring of a teeming, fruitful earth, we soldiers of the Army of the Potomac and citizens here gathered, of a Republic consecrated to the freedom of man, and equality under the law, bow our heads in prayer and benediction to that Providence that ever watches over the destiny of nations, and looking upward and forward with joy and thanksgiving, declare our cherished birthright, "I am an American citizen."

Whatever may have been the distinctions and honors enjoyed, the many responsibilities accepted and well discharged, the wishes and hopes of a great part of our people to place in the hands of Winfield Scott Hancock civil authority and constitutional power, impartial history and occasion other than this will do complete justice. Time will not mar his full deserving.

Our thought to-day goes out to the superb soldier, his work in battle, this memorable field and its many lessons.

Pennsylvania, that gave to the cause of the Union in the War of the Rebellion 315,017 white soldiers, 8612 black soldiers and 14,307 sailors and marines, aggregating 337,936, by legislative enactment places upon this historic field, to remain as long as a grateful people love liberty, and a constitutional government obeyed by all, monuments to the three distinguished soldiers of our Commonwealth who fought, bled and died upon the soil of their loved State. Words eloquent and true, though language is poor to express his great deservings, have this day dedicated the bronze and iron and stone, that history, through the sculptor's art, may exhibit the heroic, a monument to Major-General George Gordon Meade. May the love and veneration of the people for this great soldier, be commensurate with his mighty work upon this blood-stained field, and their memory as lasting as the Union which here he did so much to maintain and preserve.

Winfield Scott Hancock was one of twin brothers, born amid the hills of Montgomery county, Pennsylvania, on February 14, 1824. His father, Benjamin Franklin Hancock, and his

mother, Elizabeth Hoxworth, gave him the mingled blood of an English, Scotch and Welsh ancestry. At the age of 16 he entered West Point as a cadet, and was graduated in 1844. His very early service was frontier duty in the Indian Territory, and in 1847 and 1848 we find him active and courageous in many of the battles of the Mexican war, receiving his brevet as first lieutenant "for gallant and meritorious conduct in the battles of Contreras and Churubusco." His service was of a general character after the Mexican war, usual to young officers of his rank. He seemed, however, to have developed traits of character, detail and method during the years 1850 to 1861, specially qualifying him for that larger field of usefulness which at the commencement of the War of the Rebellion he was immediately called upon to enter as a commanding officer. Whatever he did was done critically and thoroughly. No amount of detail ever discouraged him; the regulations were his constant guide. His years since the Mexican war were full of observation, thoughtful reflection and training; all in the direction of his profession and developing his mental powers in a marked degree. The year 1861 found him a soldier of mature years, devoted to his career, absolute in his faith and fidelity to his government, and

knowing no duty other than the upholding of the honor and integrity of his country's flag. He had been trained for war "mindful of the fact that a mere multitude of brave men armed to the teeth make neither a good army nor a national defence." And when it came in all of the terrible force of civil strife and secession, it found a soldier capable of great deeds, great commands and great victories.

Handsome in form, commanding in mien and carriage, the soldier marking each feature of his clear-cut face, earnest in his every word, obedient to his superiors, exacting every obligation of duty from those whom he commanded, impressing all with whom he came in contact with confidence, trust, ability, power, and, above all, self-reliant courage. One felt safe when near him. "A combination and a form, indeed, where every god did seem to set his seal to give the world assurance of a man." He was appointed Brigadier-General of Volunteers in September, 1861. At Williamsburg, Va., he gained a brilliant victory over a superior force, and a distinguished military historian thus writes: "In that little battle were displayed on his part technical skill and personal gallantry. By his generalship and personal magnificence he won the title of Hancock the Superb, and from that day through

the war his career was one of hard work. Through it may be seen his steady growth in the higher knowledge belonging to his profession and the acquirement of a reputation for promptitude, gallantry and ability which finally made him, as he was aptly termed by a distinguished Confederate general, 'a thunderbolt of the Army of the Potomac.'"

Already he had won the confidence of his superior officers, and as a brigade commander he was conspicuous. After the battle of Antietam, General Richardson having been mortally wounded, he was assigned to the command of the First Division, Second Army Corps, and thus became allied to that body of intrepid soldiery that in history will receive the admiration of the world. When the sword of command fell from Richardson's dying hand, the historian tells us that he at once became the leader of the division, confident of his powers, a master of men. "That the staff knew it, the troops felt it. Every officer in his place, and every man in the ranks, was aware before the sun went down that he belonged to Hancock's division."

Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, with their slaughter and retreat, are history, but in that history the division he commanded marked only courage, skill, bravery and fame.

General Couch having been transferred to the Department of the Susquehanna, no soldier stood to impede the advance of Hancock to the command of his immortal Second Corps. Major-General Nelson A. Miles, now commanding the Army of the United States, thus writes of this great body of men:

“It inscribed a greater number of engagements upon its banner than did any other corps of the army, or, I think, more than any other army corps in the history of the world. The graves of its fallen are to be found on every battlefield of the Army of the Potomac from the date of its organization to Appomattox. Its capture of battle flags outnumbered its engagements. As the war for the Union was unprecedented in the history of the world, so the history of the Second Corps was unexcelled in that war. Its aggregate wounded and killed in battle surpassed that of any other corps. The greatest aggregate of killed and wounded in any division of the army was in the First Division of that corps, and the highest aggregate of killed and wounded in any one regiment of the whole army was in a regiment belonging to the Second Corps. The largest percentage of killed and wounded in a single engagement in any one regiment was in a regiment belonging to the Second Corps. The

second highest percentage of regimental loss by death and wounds was also in a regiment of that corps. As to the success and achievements of that famous corps, it captured in a single day as many battle flags, cannon and prisoners of the enemy as it lost in the entire four years of war."

In Fox's history we find:

"The Second Corps was prominent by reason of its longer and continuous service, larger organization, hardest fighting and greatest number of casualties. Within its ranks was the regiment which sustained the largest percentage of loss in any one action; also the regiment which sustained the greatest numerical loss in any one action; also the regiment which sustained the greatest numerical loss during its term of service; while of the 100 regiments in the Union army which lost the most men in battle, 35 of them belonged to the Second Corps."

Under date of August, 1864, Major-General Hancock writes Lieutenant-General Grant:

"It is perhaps known to you that this corps had never lost a color or a gun previous to this campaign, though oftener and more desperately engaged than any other corps in this army, or, perhaps, in any other in the country. I have not the means of knowing exactly the number of guns and colors captured, but I saw myself nine

in the hands of one division at Antietam, and the official reports show that 34 fell into the hands of that corps at Gettysburg. Before the opening of this campaign it had at least captured over half a hundred colors, though at cost of over 25,000 casualties. During this campaign you can judge how well the corps performed its part. It has captured more guns and colors than all the rest of the army combined. Its reverses have not been many, and they began only when the corps was dwindled to a remnant of its former strength, after it had lost 25 brigade commanders, and over 125 regimental commanders, and over 20,000 men."

General Grant in his memoirs says: "Hancock stands the most conspicuous figure of all the general officers who did not exercise a separate command. He commanded a corps longer than any other one man, and his name was never mentioned as having committed in battle a blunder. No matter how hard the fight, the Second Corps always felt that their commander was looking after them."

The command of the Army of the Potomac was transferred from Hooker to Meade, and the loyal North and the troops, officers and men, had confidence in his leadership, and that confidence was not only merited, but never misplaced.

Lee's invasion of Pennsylvania was to establish a foothold upon free soil—demand a tribute from the great cities and recognition from foreign Powers. It is needless for me upon this occasion to describe the battle. The death of the brave Reynolds on July 1 on these hills having been reported to General Meade, Hancock was directed to "immediately proceed without delay to the scene of the conflict." A wise confidence, indeed, given Hancock by Meade, in the order that placed three army corps under his command over two Major-Generals his seniors in rank, and directing him "to make an examination of the ground in the neighborhood of Gettysburg, its facilities, advantages and disadvantages for receiving battle," fully illustrates the rapid development of Hancock's soldierly abilities and capacities, as well as the confidence and esteem in which he was held by his commanding officer. His arrival upon the field of battle was most opportune. Wreck, disaster, disorder, almost the panic that precedes disorganization, defeat and retreat, were everywhere. He assumed command; soldiers retreating stopped, skulkers appeared from under their cover, lines were reformed; in the language of the writer: "And as the sun showing through a rift in the clouds may change a scene of gloom to one of beauty, so the coming of this prince of

soldiers brings life and courage to all. The show of force everywhere, with lines reformed, caused Lee to hesitate to give the order to attack positions naturally strong. "That delay saved the field of Gettysburg to the Union army."

Waterloo and Gettysburg are marked as the two great battles of the age. The Union army numbered 82,000 men and 300 guns; the Confederate numbered 70,000 men and 250 guns. The battle lasted three days and the casualties upon the Union side were 23,003, and upon the Confederate 27,525 men. In detail the Union cause lost 3063 killed and 14,492 wounded and 5435 missing or captured. Many of the wounded and many of the captured died. No authentic details are available for the Confederate side. Pennsylvania's bravery upon this field embraces 26,628 men; in detail, 68 regiments of infantry, 8 regiments of cavalry and 5 batteries of artillery. The killed and mortally wounded are 67 officers and 964 men; total, 1031. The general casualties number 5907.

Hancock's old First Division of his corps suffered great loss during the second day's fight, but exhibited its usual bravery. The enemy's assault on the third day fell directly upon Hancock's front. His troops maintained their record for unyielding courage and bravery unexampled.

Wounded severely in the midst of the fight, he remained upon the field to see his troops capture "prisoners by the thousands and battle flags in sheaves," and to dictate a dispatch to General Meade that "the enemy had been repulsed," the victory of victories won.

Returning to the army after months of suffering and painful distress, the battle flags of his matchless corps blazoned with victories, he again commanded his corps at the Wilderness, Spotsylvania, North Anna, Totopotomoy, Cold Harbor, the battles before Petersburg, Deep Bottom, and upon many other fields. In recognition of his magnificent services he was made Brigadier-General, U. S. A., August 12, 1864; Brevet Major-General, U. S. A., March 13, 1865; Major-General, U. S. A., July 26, 1866, and received the thanks of Congress May 30, 1866, "for his gallant, meritorious and conspicuous share in the great and decisive victory."

He died February 9, 1886, at Governor's Island, New York, aged 62 years.

(Addressing the Statue.)

And you, great soldier, commissioned a generation ago to carry triumphant the flag of your country on this field of battle—the greatest of the century—well done!

Pennsylvania, your native State, commissions you as sentinel over this hallowed ground. The army is all around you; the lines of battle are marked in stone, and you of bronze and iron, will ever watch and ward.

Great deeds and heroism unexampled saved the day in 1863. Great memories and obligations, never to be forgotten, will companion you through the years to come.

Meade, Hancock and Reynolds keep guard eternal. "God reigns and the government at Washington still lives!"

What are the lessons of this field of blood, valor and death? Do they teach us much or little?

"A brave man knows no malice, but at once forgets in peace the injuries of war, and gives his direst foe a friend's embrace."

While as a citizen and a soldier, recalling what was done at Gettysburg for the preservation of the Union, I may venture to hope that the time is coming, if it has not already arrived, when we shall celebrate this field as a festival of peace rather than a festival of war. The issues which developed and governed our people during the war are no more. They rest under the sod which so tenderly shelters the blue and the gray. There was a time when the fall of the Bastille

sent France into contending factions. But is there a Frenchman who would reconstruct the Bastile? There was a time when worthy American citizens, whose descendants live respected among us, walked past Carpenters' Hall and Independence Hall with averted eyes, because of the treason propounded there against their gracious sovereign. But is there an American who would tolerate the standard of St. George in the place of the "Star-Spangled Banner?" So with the questions that have sought the determination of the sword. I doubt if there be a dozen intelligent men among those who followed Lee from those Cashtown Hills, or charged with Pickett over these clover blossoming fields, who, with the knowledge open to whoever will read and think, and our recent experiences in self-government, would revive the Lost Cause, with all therein implied. It was a delusion, foolish, frenzied, impossible. The cannon shot alone could bring the true awakening. And none in our citizenship breathe more freely than those who passed through the dreadful delusion.

The peace thus attained, and as attained, was good for the North as well as the South. A soldier who in a humble way was a part of that struggle, I should feel that even victory was barren which did not bring with it reconciliation.

We bore from this field the olive branch as the unfading emblem of fraternity, rather than the laurel, with the suggestions of strife. We bear the olive branch to-day, and in its proffer, as well as in a loyal acceptance of that proffer by our southern friends, we have, I am proud to believe, the consummation of an undying and invincible Union.

We should remember, also, that this was a war of the people; that the soldiers who came upon this field were but an armed expression of the loyalty which remained at home. It is not alone those within the enemies' musket range who do the battle. Cruel indeed, cruel and un-availing, would be the war which was not sustained by the efforts and prayers of the people. Therefore, it is true that those who by their exertions, sacrifices and prayers, made possible an honorable war, should be remembered and esteemed for their patriotism. Without that support, without a nation's resources and credit to command, no civilized country could conduct a just war. Our soldiers would be adventurers and marauders, like those who followed Attila and Tamerlane, mere robbers who made desolation and called it peace; before whose fury no living thing could endure, whose trophies were mounds of skulls, who revelled in destruction, for the joy

of rapine, and under whose sway was neither clemency, magnanimity nor justice. It was not so with those who fought on these Pennsylvania plains. It was not glory, nor preferment, nor booty, nor slaking the thirst for blood—victory brought no exultation over a beaten foe, nor joy in his misfortune; war was justice, cold, uncompromising, immutable. War was chastisement, not conquest. No gun was fired in anger. No, my friends; not in anger; but with a determination that right should endure. That assured, and peace alone remained. On this and in the highest attribute of charity, patience and mercy, the secession war stands unique among campaigns. There was no ravaging of the Palatinate; no storming of Saragossa; no blowing of prisoners from cannons, as in India; no refusal of quarter, as at Plevna; no burning of libraries and places of sanctuary, neither confiscation nor banishment, nor capital punishment, not even disfranchisement attended the victories of the North. It was because by war alone peace could come, and with peace every war-engendered passion vanished into oblivion.

Here, likewise, we learned what manhood could do in war. Gettysburg was the people's battle. The skill of the schoolman and the training consequent upon military experience were not

without their effect. But taken all in all, it was the American man fighting the American man. Virginia at tierce and point with Pennsylvania, man to man, and a stern issue between them, with no arbitrament but arms. If we fought our brothers we made a fraternal peace. The world in marvel has seen conquered and conqueror rising from the dust of strife, and yet ready to march under one flag and seek a common enemy. This is what we understand when we regard Gettysburg as a people's battle—not the battle of the hireling and the adventurer. There was reason in the provocation to war, reason and wisdom in peace. We were one at the beginning; we are one at the end, and with underlying, intervening bonds of sympathy, which not even battle could sever, but which grew in strength and grace every day. No American can regard Gettysburg with sorrow or shame. The Frenchman looks at Waterloo with a humiliation which generations cannot efface. No German cares to evoke the memories of Jena; nor do Englishmen find other than a soldier's consolation in Saratoga, New Orleans or the Brandywine. But no American, be he from this land of snow or yonder land of the sun, can ride over Seminary Ridge, or past the fastnesses of the Round Tops, with any sentiment but regret for those who fought here,

whether blue or gray, and no dearer hope than that when he and his children should be again summoned to arms it will be shoulder to shoulder, not face to face, and that the valor which fought and won and lost at Gettysburg may still endure.

Gettysburg is what Byron might have called a "king-making victory"—the agency by which an all-seeing, inscrutable Providence was to sway the destiny of a nation. It is to misunderstand, to belittle the philosophy, we might even venture to say the piety, of such an event to see in it nothing but the chivalry and pomp of war. Not in our day will we understand what was done here—its historical fulness and fruition. That will be made clear in far-off seasons that we may not see. As our generation recedes, as we drift from the current living tides of the hour into the placid sea of history, Gettysburg looms before and above us, covering the horizon; thus looming, we see something of its magnitude and splendor. It is as the peak to the wayfarer, under whose shadow he seems to rest, but which Etna-like, pierces the immeasurable heavens miles and miles away.

Thus it is that Gettysburg may be said to tower over the eventful teeming century now drawing to a close. This nineteenth century has been rich in warlike renown. It has seen

Marengo, where a young captain scaled the Alps to descend upon a conquered Italy and ascend an imperial throne. It has seen Austerlitz, the battle of the three Emperors, where the Kings of Europe were brought to the feet of a ruler whose sceptre was his sword. It heard the roar of Waterloo, the world's earthquake, in which was engulfed the greatest soldier since Caesar—which taught even a Napoleon—that “tempted fate, would leave the loftiest star.” It has seen Navarino, where the European power of Islam was broken; where beautiful, renowned and harried Greece was rescued from the scimeter of the Caliphs and restored to her venerable and illustrious place among nations. It has seen Cerre Gordo, where the genius and valor of a handful of men—Meade, McClellan, Lee and Longstreet, fighting side by side—gave us our El Dorado empire. It has seen Sebastopol, which checked the advance of the Cossack upon the Bosphorus; Solferino, which assured Italy freedom and autonomy; Sadowa, which gave Prussia the primacy among German powers; Plevna, which made possible the Russian road to Constantinople, and Sedan, the complement of Waterloo, which overthrew the Napoleonic legend and realized the hopes of Barrosa.

Yes; the nineteenth century may well be

called the century of world-changing events—of triumph and catastrophe, of a people trodden under the heels of the invader—of a people rising in their majesty and establishing freedom upon the ruins of thrones. A century of invention, progress, humanity, industry, and civilization, it has likewise been a century of war. Among the achievements thus recited, their glory encircling, as though it were a zone, the proudest of nations, none surpasses the glory of Gettysburg. This we may well say, whether we consider what was done here, or the political and moral consequence of what must ever be chronicled as among the noblest of victories. In the largest sense, it was the triumph of freedom over slavery; the confirmation of our fathers' pledges in behalf of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness;" the victory of order over chaos; the consolidation of the Union into a firm, unquestioned government; the assurance of mankind that the Republic was builded upon a rock, and not upon crumbling, shifting sands—builded to endure until time was no more. It was the victory of the ballot over the bayonet; the asseveration of the people that their will expressed through the franchise had the majesty of law. It was the triumph of the republican over other systems of government, remembering, as we should never forget, that no

Confederate gun would have been fired at Gettysburg but for the aid and inspiration of unfriendly Powers—to whom democracy was abhorrent, and not to be endured. Gettysburg was the victory of knowledge over ignorance, of humanity over tyranny, of wisdom as against folly, of the schoolhouse superseding and suppressing the auction-block and the shackles of the slave, of patriotism conquering rebellion, of truth opposed to falsehood. It was Lincoln taking hands with Washington to save the Republic which our first President had founded. Upon this field caste fell, freedom arose never to fall again, and American valor found its warrant to be respected over the world.

There is a quaint German legend, somewhere, embodied in verse, telling how at times the great Emperor, on his breast a blazing star, comes from his jasper tomb under the gilded dome, and surrounded by a phantom staff of the heroes whose genius gave him sovereignty and fame, holds his sombre, silent midnight review. Before him pass the ghostly columns of the soldiers who once bore his eagles to the Danube and the Elbe, to Wagram and Friedland, and the Beresino, into almost every European capital. There, blood-stained, you see Murat as eager as when his plumes waved armies to the battery

and the breach. There is Ney, the bravest of the brave. At the Emperor's side note the tender, chivalrous Desaix, who gave his life that his friend and commander might win a crown. Lannes, no longer writhing upon the battlefield, but as triumphant as when he fought at Austerlitz. The virtuous and knightly Macdonald, wearing the sabre which marked his master's esteem. Berthier, Junot, Duroc, Bertrand, Kellerman, Soult, sit in mute homage to the Imperial spectre who wears the shining star. The Pennsylvanian who looks over this memorable field, now teeming with the wealth of valley and meadow, and radiant with summer beauty, may, in the spirit of this German legend, summon another review. He may likewise see in the shadows another mighty host of soldiers and great captains, who come once more to visit this field of their devotion and their fame. Under the benediction of the star-lit heavens he may with reverence recall their deeds—their triumphs, perhaps, that supreme consecration which gave them death under their flag—a blessed death indeed. In grateful remembrance and worship he may see the silent host pass on. Meade rides in the advance—the Bayard of Pennsylvania's heroes; calm, fearless, confident, in whose wise judgment largely rested the destiny of a great people.

Reynolds, of Lancaster, is near him, glowing with impatient valor which was to win for him the felicity of dying for Pennsylvania—on his State's dear soil. There you note Humphreys among our modest heroes, his fame to be partly forgotten in the blare of events, but coming to due and lasting recognition. Geary, his face worn with service in other wars, the founding of our Pacific empire and of the free Commonwealth of Kansas—higher honors awaiting him from his native State—silently passes at the head of his brave command. Alexander Hays, rugged, emphatic, the Scotch-Irish lines in his face—so soon to go down to the death of his dearest choice in Virginia trenches—leads his men. Kane, of the Bucktails, the brilliant, impetuous possessor of a famous name, is still eager for the strife. Our own Birney, championing on the field the love of freedom which came with his blood. Hector Tyndale, with his stern faith in what he deemed the truth. The brave and gentle Crawford, to whom the severest duty was a joy. McCandless, always a partisan, but ever a patriot. Many other captains sacred to us because of what they did, who have been transferred from the roster of time to the muster-roll of eternity. And so the long and shadowy line of heroes passes on in this sombre, silent midnight review.

There as on that most memorable day—the culminating glory of his undying fame, proud, defiant, triumphant, exhilaration in the cannon-shot—victory in his mien, enthusiasm in his example, even as amid the crash and war of his cannonade, the illumination of battle upon his handsome, martial face, he rode the Union line, his words a summons to the field from which he was soon to be borne, stricken with heavy wounds, the mighty shade of our comrade in arms, “of stainless name, of unblotted record, of immortal memory,” our Hancock passes in review. This illustrious commander of a chivalrous army fitly represents the chivalry of the war. This is the man whom to-day we came to honor. And thus he passes in solemn midnight review.

No great captain, wearing the shining star, with memories of tyranny and rapine, to darken those of imperial renown, holds this stately ceremony. The shades of Gettysburg march in review before even a mightier shade than that of Napoleon. This sublime presence, before whom the shadows pass, this, their beloved, immortal Lincoln, who returns their salute with a most gracious, sad smile, likewise shed his blood, and from his heart and brain came the inspiration which impelled them to victory. Lincoln was with them in sorrow and pain; he is with them

now, even in this midnight review, sharing with them the joy of silence and peace, bequeathing the lesson of his life and his death. Even as the poet, while chanting "Morituri Salutamus," would have us take courage from the examples of the dead, so do we, as this silent pageant is suffused into impartial, enfolding night, pray that should the hour come to the present as it came to the past generation, our people may emulate the self-sacrifice and devotion to which this field bears everlasting tribute. Let them remember as they invoke this august presence, "To take increased devotion to that cause for which" their fathers and brothers "gave the last full measure of devotion," and never forget the message which fell from his lips, as the sacred lesson of Gettysburg, that the "government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

The clang and din of battle here gives place to the soothing voices of the night. The furrows once torn with suffering and death, now yield to the ripening grain. The reapers sing a song of peace. The fear of imminent doom no longer darkens the fireside. Even as war loses its horrors, and the fancy of the orator and poet clothes its most terrible deeds as with roses and ivy, so this battlefield will rest under the halo of magna-

nimity, fellowship and romance. The Gettysburg of the Secession war, fast melting into history, will become the Marathon of a new generation. Those of us remaining, who with firm set lips and strained eyes listened to its roar, realize that its achievements stripped of their struggles and sorrows, are becoming a part of an insensible, almost a traditional, past. It is no longer a memory of those and to those who fought through the summer days, but a section of history to be studied while the years go on, with Agincourt, Blenheim and Saratoga. The silent host passes on to be lost in the shadows and the gloom.









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